Replacement of faulty PCO instruments in Bilaspur

†356. SHRIMATI KAMLA MANHAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that equipment installed in PCOs in rural areas of Bilaspur and Chhattisgarh remain out of order generally, consequently customers remain deprived of these services;

(b) if so, the action being taken by Government to change the equipments and rectify the faulty lines; and

(c) the details of progress made in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD) : (a) and (b) No, Sir. The faults reported in PCO instruments provided by BSNL are attended to promptly and do not persist for longer durations. However, some Village Public Telephones (VPTs) working on obsolete MARR technology and on long over head lines remain faulty for longer duration. It is planned to replace these by WLL technology, progressively. For PCO owned by the franchisee, the instrument is provided and maintained by franchisee himself at his own cost.

(c) In Chhattisgarh circle, 6210 VPTs have been replaced by WLL so far, out of which 1576 are in Bilaspur.

E-connectivity to African countries

357. SHRI R.K. ANAND: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has announced to provide e-connectivity to 53 African countries;

(b) whether Government have a International Youth Satellite scheme to provide connectivity to students and universities around the globe;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) what would be the time-frame and the projected expense on these schemes?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is no specific International Youth Satellite Scheme for Africa.

(c) and (d) The cost of establishing the Pan-African Network for e-connectivity to African countries, as announced by the President of India, has been provisionally estimated to be around US$50 million. It is also expected that the setting up of the network would be done in a phased manner in partnership with the African countries in a period of around 24 months from the date of commencement of the project.

New technology for rural areas

358. SHRI R.K. ANAND: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that US and UK are in the process of implementing a new technology which allows television, phone and data transfer in a single network;

(b) whether it is a fact that TRAI is willing to push this technology as the most preferred one for rural areas; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) have reported that they follow a technology neutral approach and have carried out a consultation process for promoting telecommunication services in rural areas.

Introduction of cheaper local landline call charges

359. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to introduce cheaper local landline call charges and mobile roaming charges;